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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the second part* of the 301st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 7 June 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

Contents

Special meeting to mark 40 years of occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

Statements by United Nations Members and Observers (continued)

Statements by representatives of civil society organizations (continued)

Closing remarks by the Chairman of the Committee

* The summary record of the first part of the meeting, held on Thursday, 7 June 2007, at 10.30 a.m., appears as document A/AC.183/SR.301.

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The meeting was reconvened at 3.15 p.m.

Special meeting to mark 40 years of occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

Statements by United Nations Members and Observers (continued)

1. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said that the situation in the Middle East was an issue of paramount importance to the international community. The circumstances of the Palestinians in the occupied territories had worsened owing to the intensification of Israeli aggression. The withholding of revenues, regular incursions into the Palestinian Territory, wanton assassinations and the detention of elected members of the Palestinian Government and legislature caused untold misery. The restrictions on Palestinians' movements and the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory paralysed the Palestinians' economic and social activities and effectively confined them to an open-air prison. Her delegation condemned Israel's policies, which contravened international law and hampered international efforts to promote a comprehensive and just solution pursuant to numerous United Nations resolutions.

2. Her delegation welcomed the commitment of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, to addressing new and emerging threats to peace and security. However, such commitment was lacking in the search for a solution to the Palestinian issue. The Council had shown little interest in compelling Israel to implement the relevant resolutions, an attitude which could be said to have emboldened Israel in the pursuit of its policies.

3. Her delegation welcomed the establishment by the Palestinians of a national unity Government and the determination of the Palestinian people to strive for peace through political negotiation. It was to be hoped that that positive development at the leadership level would encourage the reconciliation process at the grass-roots level. Ultimately, peace could not be achieved through diplomacy alone. The parties to the conflict must exercise restraint and avoid any action that complicated matters further. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the institution of regular meetings between Palestinian and Israeli leaders.

4. However, experience had shown that tangible results would not be achieved without the active engagement of the international community, particularly of those countries that had a direct influence on the parties concerned. The Quartet had a vital role to play in reviving the peace process and implementing the road map. It should be determined in its efforts to establish an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital and coexisting in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours, on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 242 (1967).

5. The efforts of the Quartet must be complemented by efforts on the part of the regional stakeholders. The Arab peace initiative of 2002, reaffirmed at the recent summit of the League of Arab States in Riyadh, could bring normality to the Middle East on the basis of a formula that allowed the countries of the region to play their part in the process. At the same time, the international community must address the dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people by providing financial and material assistance to the Palestinian Government.

6. Indonesia reiterated its call for the early establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State with the right for all Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, living side by side in peace with Israel, as outlined in the road map of the Quartet and the relevant United Nations resolutions. In the interests of peace and justice, Israel should be made to honour its obligations in that regard.

7. **Mr. Sorcar** (Observer for Bangladesh) said that the commemoration of 40 years of Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem was a painful reminder of the failure of the international community to resolve the situation in the Middle East. The occupation was the root cause of the spiralling violence and hostilities in the region, whose effects were being felt around the world.

8. Jerusalem — or Al-Quds Al-Sharif — was a holy site for all three monotheistic faiths — Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The city, in particular the Al-Aqsa Mosque, held special religious significance for Muslims. It was regrettable that Israel was carrying out its illegal activities in brazen violation of United Nations resolutions and in utter disrespect for the religious sensibilities of Muslims all over the world. The recent demolition by Israeli occupation forces of the historic road connecting Bab Al-Magharibah with the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and the excavation being carried out underneath the compound were

undermining its foundations and threatening it with collapse. His delegation condemned those activities, which cast doubt on the sincerity of Israel's desire to resume the peace process, and called for determined action by the United Nations in that regard.

9. His delegation was dismayed at the worsening humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and at the recent breakdown of the ceasefire and the renewed escalation of violence. It called on Israel to exercise maximum restraint and to withdraw the economic blockade imposed on the Palestinians. It also called for an immediate halt to the construction of the wall in the Occupied Territory and the dismantling of those parts already built, the discontinuation and reversal of the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the release of Palestinian prisoners, and resumption of the transfer of tax revenues.

10. His delegation reiterated its full support for the legitimate and inalienable right of the Palestinian people to a sovereign and independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, existing alongside Israel in peace and security. For a just and sustainable peace to take root, Israel must withdraw its forces from all the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, and meet its obligations under the Geneva Conventions, relevant United Nations resolutions and other peace initiatives, including the road map. His delegation urged the warring parties to resume negotiations in order to overcome the current impasse in the peace process. It was also high time for the States Members of the United Nations to fulfil their collective obligation by re-engaging in the peace process with a view to achieving a just and sustainable solution to the conflict.

11. **Mr. Hachani** (Tunisia) said that the fortieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories was of particular importance as the Palestinian people continued to suffer under the occupation and yearned to obtain its legitimate rights, recover its occupied lands and establish an independent State. Since the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian issue had been at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and had caused extremism and terrorism, as well as deepening regional and international tension and instability.

12. His country had supported the Palestinian cause as a matter of principle. It had hosted the Palestinian leadership for twelve years and stood by the Palestinian people in the struggle for the restoration of its legitimate rights. Moreover, it had contributed to international efforts to find a peaceful settlement that could lead to a just and comprehensive peace.

13. From the outset, his Government had sought a negotiated solution based on international legitimacy, Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace. It had hosted the first of the American-Palestinian meetings, which had paved the way for the peace process. It had been an active participant in all of the relevant summits and, in particular, the Madrid Conference, had hosted the meetings of a number of multilateral committees and had supported the Arab Peace Initiative.

14. A just and comprehensive peace would entail restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Palestinian Arab soil and the cessation of Israeli hostilities against the Palestinian people, its national institutions and holy places. Moreover, Israel would be required to cease targeting the infrastructure in violation of international law and fundamental human rights principles.

15. His Government had often emphasized the need to provide international protection to the Palestinian people, to end its suffering and to protect its holy places, primarily Al-Aqsa Mosque, and end the excavations around it. The international community and, in particular, the Quartet and the Security Council should strive to move the peace process forward based on Arab and international terms of reference, in particular, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and the United Nations resolutions and agreements concluded with the Palestinians. His Government welcomed the Mecca Agreement, reached under the auspices of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, which encouraged greater effort by the international community to lift the blockade from the Palestinian people and revive the peace process.

16. It was to be hoped that all parties would seek a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Forty years on, it was more necessary than ever to resolve the conflict, achieve security and stability and allow the peoples of the region to build, develop and achieve economic and social progress.

17. **Mr. Castellón Duarte** (Observer for Nicaragua) said that the 40 years of occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had resulted in 40 years of suffering for the Palestinian

people, which had been deprived of its right to self-determination, the right of return and the right to live in peace with its neighbours. The basic human rights of the Palestinian people had been violated and there had been immeasurable loss of life and damage to property. United Nations resolutions had not succeeded in allowing the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights owing to the Occupying Power's lack of respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.

18. His delegation was concerned by the socio-economic situation and difficult humanitarian conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which were the result of the illegal practices and policies of the Occupying Power. It was also concerned by Israel's ongoing campaign of settler colonialism and the unlawful annexation of territories, which changed the demographic and geographic character of the Palestine Territory, including East Jerusalem. The construction of the separation wall had caused physical, economic and social devastation and contravened the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Nicaragua called on the international community and the Quartet to continue their efforts aimed at reviving the peace process with a view to ending the occupation and achieving a two-State solution that respected the rights of all States and peoples of the region to live in peace and security. It supported the revival of the Arab Peace Initiative which had been announced at the summit of the League of Arab States in March 2007 in Riyadh. It was the responsibility of the United Nations to continue to work towards achieving a solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects, including the establishment of a viable, independent Palestinian State within well-defined and secure borders. The people and Government of Nicaragua reaffirmed their friendship and solidarity with the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority in their struggle for liberation and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State.

19. **Mr. Kariyawasam** (Observer for Sri Lanka) said that his delegation appreciated the continuing efforts of the Committee to promote the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to mobilize the international community to that end. The efforts of the international community over the past 40 years had yet to bring lasting peace and security to the region or to mitigate the suffering of the Palestinian people. However, the comprehensive settlement envisaged in the Quartet's road map and the initiative of Saudi Arabia, endorsed by the League of Arab States, were encouraging developments.

20. During the 40 years of Israeli occupation, the Palestinian people had undergone severe hardships and repeated human rights violations, and there was no end in sight. The continued occupation and military action had resulted in the loss of many lives and livelihoods and the displacement of large numbers of Palestinians from their homeland. That situation was a matter of deep concern to all peace-loving people.

21. Sri Lanka's commitment to the Palestinian people remained undiminished. Peace and stability could be brought to the region only through a negotiated settlement between the parties to the conflict, leading to an independent and democratic State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital and living side by side with Israel, on the basis of all the relevant Security Council resolutions.

22. **The Chairman** announced that a message had been received from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

Statements by representatives of civil society organizations (continued)

23. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Khalil (Negotiations Support Unit, Palestine Liberation Organization) took a place at the Committee table.*

24. **Mr. Khalil** (Negotiations Support Unit, Palestine Liberation Organization) said that, after 40 years of occupation by Israel of the Palestinian territories, a critical stage had been reached. The next few months would determine whether the conflict between the two sides continued for another 40 years. The past four decades had been characterized not only by the Israeli occupation but also by Israel's continued pursuit of a unilateralist policy, exemplified by its unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005.

25. From the Palestinian perspective, Israel's strategy over the past 40 years had been to take as much Palestinian land as possible with as few Palestinians as possible on that land. If Israel had simply annexed the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it would have had to grant millions of Palestinians — who were Christians and Muslims — the right to vote, thereby undermining

its status as a democratic Jewish State and upsetting the demographic balance.

26. The occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip comprised only 22 per cent of the land known as historic Palestine. In 1988, the Palestinians had recognized Israel's existence in the remaining 78 per cent of the land on the understanding that any future Palestinian State would be a full, free and independent sovereign State built on the aforementioned 22 per cent of the land. However, the Palestinian National Authority established under the Oslo peace process had been granted only limited authority over just 18 per cent of that 22 per cent portion. Israel had retained security control over the remainder of the occupied territories, and between 1993 and 1999 the settler population in those areas had grown at the fastest rate in history. Therefore, the Oslo peace process had resulted in isolation of the Palestinian-controlled areas and the entrenchment of Israeli control over the remaining areas.

27. The wall being constructed by Israel did not, for most of its length, follow the Green Line but rather cut deep into the West Bank, incorporating 85 per cent of the settler population into Israel on the western side of the wall. Moreover, the fact that scarce water resources, key arable lands and the essential marketplace of East Jerusalem were on the western side of the wall destroyed the possibility of establishing a viable Palestinian State and undermined the ultimate goal of a two-State solution to the conflict. In addition, many of the Israeli settlements on the eastern side of the wall were being expanded. Thus, Israel was carrying out a de facto annexation of almost half of the West Bank, leaving a diminished and fragmented territory in which the Palestinians were supposed to build an independently viable economy.

28. It was difficult to see how such a fragmentation of Palestinian territory could ensure greater security for Israel than adherence to the internationally recognized border formed by the Green Line. The International Court of Justice had ruled that the construction of the wall was illegal and that those sections already built must be dismantled. In addition, a recent report by the World Bank had stated that it was not always clear when restrictions on the movement of Palestinians were being used for security purposes and when they were being used to protect the interests of the settlers.

29. An example of the fragmentation of Palestinian territory in the West Bank could be seen in the towns of Qalqilya, Jayyus and Habla, which were cut off from each other by the route of the wall and whose development was thereby hampered. The people of Jayyus had previously grown vegetables which they had sold all over the northern West Bank. Now, however, two thirds of the area's agricultural land and most of its wells were on the west side of the wall, and half of the town's population was dependent on food assistance from the international community.

30. The area south of Qalqilya, between the Green Line and the wall, was now a "closed zone". Palestinians who lived in the closed zone or who had land there were obliged to apply periodically for a permit from the Israeli army to enter the zone. By contrast, Israelis — including persons capable of immigrating to Israel under the Israeli law of return, such as foreign converts to Judaism — could enter and live in the zone without a permit and were provided with cheap housing, social services and employment.

31. Farmers were obliged to access their land, sell their produce or send their children to school on the other side of the wall and would move there, gradually, because of the inconvenience of that arrangement. The land would eventually be vacated, making it difficult for Palestinian negotiators to argue in favour of keeping it.

32. The same process was happening throughout the West Bank and around East Jerusalem, in particular. The area from Ramallah to Bethlehem, which had once represented 40 per cent of all economic activity in the West Bank and was crucial to any viable two-State solution, was being fragmented by settlements and the wall. In and around Jerusalem, settlements were linked to Israel by roads, built on Palestinian land, to which most Palestinians had no access. Those roads were walled: combined with the wall proper, they created and surrounded Arab enclaves, making Jerusalem physically separate from the West Bank.

33. The two areas were also being separated politically. Because of their different residency status, Palestinians in Jerusalem and in the West Bank required permits, obtained from Israel, to move from one area to the other. The physical and political excision of East Jerusalem from the West Bank inhibited economic and social interaction between the two and jeopardized the future viability of those

communities. If that settlement strategy continued, Jerusalem could cease to be a symbol of multiculturalism in 30 years. Meanwhile, if the Palestinians were to establish their capital in East Jerusalem, it would be encircled by the territory and citizens of a foreign sovereign State.

34. The United Nations and World Bank had identified restrictions on movement as the direct cause of the present humanitarian crisis in the West Bank. Israel's proposed solution had been to construct a separate system of roads and tunnels for the Palestinians. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had discovered that Israel was actually constructing two networks, one for Palestinians and one modern highway network linking Israeli settlements.

35. When Israel had withdrawn 8,000 settlers from Gaza in 2005, it had made plans to introduce 30,000 settlers to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel would continue to entrench its control over key arable land, water resources and the market place of East Jerusalem, to the absolute detriment of the two-State solution, if both sides could not agree to a just solution. In order to avoid another 40 years of occupation and conflict, it was crucial to act immediately and focus on three principles: the need to create economic opportunity, by implementing the Agreement on Movement and Access; the need to save the two-State solution and abide by the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice; the creation of a political horizon meaningful to both sides, by engaging with the Arab Peace Initiative and negotiating now.

36. *Mr. Khalil (Negotiations Support Unit, Palestine Liberation Organization) withdrew.*

37. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. El-Farra (Middle East Children's Alliance) took a place at the Committee table.*

38. **Ms. El-Farra** (Middle East Children's Alliance) observed that it was time to bring justice to the Palestinian people. Other speakers had mentioned the economic plight of Palestinians and the widespread abuse of their human rights in Israeli prisons. Although numerous resolutions had been adopted by the United Nations and calls made for a two-State solution, on the ground Israel continued its aggression against the vulnerable, with demolitions of homes and construction of the wall. The two-State solution was not the answer: real peace with justice was only possible through support for the right to return of all Palestinians.

39. The occupation deprived Palestinians of their most basic needs. In Gaza, which was her home and home to 1.4 million others, life was unsafe and overcrowded. At work, she witnessed daily the difficulties of patients denied permits and access to proper medical treatment, as a result of which many died. Preventable diseases such as anaemia were common among children under five, as was the post-traumatic stress disorder that resulted from the constant military activities of Israel. Human rights violations were commonplace. One woman, held up for hours at an Israeli checkpoint while going to give birth at a hospital in a neighbouring camp, had returned with her newborn child to find her home demolished. She also cited the example of a thirsty four-year-old who had refused water from an Israeli soldier, to illustrate the child's fear, provide an example of the steadfastness and resistance of the Palestinians and show how the Israeli soldier had also been dehumanized by the occupation machine.

40. Adults had an obligation to provide a safe environment for Palestinian and Israeli children. The wall would not achieve safety or security; only a just peace that respected the inalienable rights of the Palestinians would do that. It was necessary for Israel to recognize its moral responsibility to Palestinian refugees. Israel controlled all aspects of life within Gaza. Life under occupation was degrading and deprived Palestinians of the freedom to make choices. However, the occupation had been normalized and hope for the future lost as the world continued to look away. She called on the international community to pressure Israel to abide by the relevant United Nations resolutions. The occupation should end and the right of return be remembered.

41. *Ms. El-Farra (Middle East Children's Alliance) withdrew.*

42. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Diamond (B'Tselem — The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) took a place at the Committee table.*

43. **Mr. Diamond** (B'Tselem — The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) gave a brief personal account of the moment at which he had realized the extent to which he and his fellow Israeli soldiers were inured to

violence, accepting risks for Palestinian children that he would not accept for his own. That realization had prompted him to work for a human rights organization.

44. His organization had issued approximately 130 reports on human rights violations in the occupied territories and its primary focus was on violations by representatives of Israel. The violations of human or humanitarian rights were usually justified as necessary for security and often showed no regard for Palestinian well-being. The security justification often masked other illegitimate concerns, such as the expansion of settlements established in violation of international humanitarian law; the route of the wall was primarily designed to allow settlements to expand. The numerous settlements were constructed with the help and encouragement of the authorities, which connected the settlements, recognized as legal under Israeli law, to the utilities network. Moreover, the numerous physical and legal restrictions on freedom of movement were devastating as they served to unravel the fabric of Palestinian life.

45. Thousands of Palestinians had been arrested and detained without trial. Prisoners who were offered a trial were summoned to appear in military courts and were nearly always convicted. Israeli soldiers were given orders that violated both Israeli law and international humanitarian law because they did not differentiate between military and civilian targets. The Israeli army's air strikes in Gaza represented another form of occupation from the air. The Center had received thousands of disturbing testimonies, covering a small fraction of the violations that had been committed. Those testimonies showed that there was a pervasive lack of accountability and that the settlers believed that they were free to do what they wanted.

46. Although the violations committed by the Israeli armed forces were the primary focus of the Center's work, it was important to draw attention to the responsibilities of other actors. The international community could do much more to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. The activities carried out by some States were well-meaning but sometimes made it easier for the Government of Israel to evade its responsibilities under international law. The electricity plant in Gaza that had been bombed by Israeli forces on 26 June 2006 had not been repaired by the Government of Israel because other parties had intervened. The Government of Israel had insisted that special security measures should be implemented at the Karni Crossing in Gaza but had not paid for those measures.

47. The struggle between different factions in Gaza had led to violations of the rights of the Palestinian people by Palestinians. The rights of members of the international community had also been violated and kidnappings of international workers were frequent occurrences. The violations of human rights committed by Israelis and Palestinians contravened international humanitarian law and were contrary to the basic principles of human decency. Those violations led to increased suffering and hatred. It was essential to insist that all parties complied with international rules in order to establish the goodwill that would lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

48. **The Chairman** said that the Committee valued the systematic monitoring carried out by the Center, whose reports provided a credible source of information for States, intergovernmental bodies and civil society.

49. *Mr. Diamond (B'Tselem — The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) withdrew.*

50. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Gassner (BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights) took a place at the Committee table.*

51. **Ms. Gassner** (BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights) said that there was a vital need to find ways of overcoming the exclusion of Palestinian refugees in the search for peace. All Palestinian refugees had the right of return and the right to restitution and compensation under international law. There was no contradiction between the right to self-determination and the right of return of refugees to homes in areas that had become part of Israel. In fact, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people also included the right of return.

52. It was important to recognize that the 1967 occupation was not the root cause of the problem: the question of Palestine had been considered by the United Nations for almost 60 years and 2008 would mark the sixtieth anniversary of *Al-Naqba* (the catastrophe). The reason why the Government of Israel did not end the occupation was the same as the reason why it prevented the return of the refugees who had been displaced in 1948. It had established a form of apartheid aimed at maintaining a Jewish majority.

Palestinian civil society had not received much support from the international community in trying to include the rights of the Palestinian refugees in the search for peace.

53. The Resource Center was owned by members of the Palestinian refugee organizations in the West Bank and had been founded following conferences on the protection of the rights of the Palestinian refugees in the peace process. It networked with civil society organizations in Israel, the Middle East, the United States and Europe and aimed to establish a common understanding about the rights of the Palestinian refugees. It should be noted that Israeli civil society organizations had cooperated in raising awareness about the right of return of Palestinian refugees. Education campaigns had been targeted at young Palestinian refugees to assist them in understanding their rights. There was a growing body of experts working on the question of the Palestinian refugees. Civil society organizations had been actively involved in the global campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel. It was important that the right of return of Palestinian refugees should be included as a condition for ending that campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions. The Resource Center had campaigned to raise awareness of the 2008 sixtieth anniversary of *Al-Naqba* and recommended the establishment of a commission of inquiry with the support of the United Nations and the Committee to investigate the events of 1948. The Center had participated in civil society conferences organized by the Committee and recommended that future conferences should focus on analysing the root causes of the conflict, on drawing attention to the coexistence of the right to self-determination and the right of return of the Palestinian people and on finding creative ways of ensuring the enforcement of international law.

54. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had taken note of the proposals made by the Resource Center and hoped to incorporate them into its programme of work for either 2007 or 2008.

55. *Ms. Gassner (BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights) withdrew.*

56. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Shapira (Combatants for Peace) took a place at the Committee table.*

57. **Mr. Shapira** (Combatants for Peace) said that his organization consisted of a growing number of Israeli and Palestinian former combatants who had agreed to denounce and break the cycle of violence and to seek peace and justice and an end to the brutal occupation of Palestine. He and other Israeli pilots had publicly refused to carry out military orders that they saw as immoral, illegal and contrary to the international rules of war, in particular orders involving attacks on civilian concentrations and targets. Israelis tried to ignore the occupation, *Al-Naqba* and Palestinian rights, but until they faced those facts no peace plan could succeed. The violence used by Israel to maintain the occupation and by Palestinians to resist it corrupted both societies. One of the factors that sustained the violence was the huge quantity of often sophisticated arms supplied to Israel by the United States. Some saw the Israel Defense Forces as field testers of United States weapons systems, providing a profitable market and testing ground for the United States arms industry.

58. Another factor that impeded the search for a viable solution to the situation was the vain hope that the Israeli Government would change its policies. That hope was illusory and should be abandoned. At the current stage, only significant pressure on Israel's leadership by the United States and Europe could produce a change in policy. In that connection, he urged the adoption of targeted sanctions against the Government. He also urged the international community to support and use his and other similar organizations in Palestine and Israel in the important struggle for peace and justice.

59. *Mr. Shapira (Combatants for Peace) withdrew.*

60. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) expressed his gratitude for the many expressions of support for his country's struggle to achieve self-determination and liberation during the long years of brutal Israeli oppression and occupation. He hoped that in a few years the situation would change for the better and that the Committee would be able to celebrate the establishment of a sovereign, independent State of Palestine.

Closing remarks by the Chairman of the Committee

61. **The Chairman** said that the many statements made had shown in detail how the longest occupation in modern history had affected every aspect of the lives of the Palestinian people. The international community considered the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian

territory, with its complete disregard for international humanitarian and human rights law, to be the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Member States had a duty to ensure that the relevant resolutions of the United Nations were implemented, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Committee appreciated the many efforts on the part of civil society around the world to keep the question of Palestine in the focus of public opinion. The whole international community had a moral obligation to work urgently towards an end to the occupation of Palestine, towards the establishment of a just Palestinian State living side by side with a secure Israel and towards the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.